

to amend their Constitution so that all segments of that society feel that the Government is for them. They've got to spend our money on reconstruction projects that help unite the country. They've got to have local elections so people feel involved in the Provincial governments. In other words, there's benchmarks that they have got to achieve. And I have made it clear to the Iraqi Government, just like I made it clear to the American people: Our commitment is not open-ended.

We've got other equities in foreign policy that I know we can work together on. I cannot thank you enough for supporting the HIV/AIDS initiative on the continent of Africa. It's a pleasure to be able to stand up in front of the American people and say, "Your tax dollars have made a significant difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people." And this plan would not have been funded without the able leadership and support of many people here in this building, and I appreciate that.

We've set another great goal, and that's to reduce malaria in countries on the continent of Africa. And I'm convinced we can

work together with a—[applause]—strategy that will work. I promised people in my State of the Union that we will continue to pursue freedom in places like Cuba or Belarus or Burma, and that we'll continue to rally the world to stay focused on Darfur.

And so this is a bold agenda for all of us. And I agree, Madam Speaker; there's a chance to show people that we can get beyond the politics of Washington, DC; that we're able to treat each other with civility and, at the same time, accomplish big goals. And so I've come, at your kind invitation, to assure the members that I look forward to working with you in doing the best we possibly can do for the good of all American citizens.

Thank you for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in Ballroom A at the Kingsmill Resort & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and her grandson, Paul M. Vos, and daughter, Alexandra Pelosi; and Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida.

Remarks Following a Meeting at the House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference in Williamsburg *February 3, 2007*

The President. Speaker, thank you. First of all, thanks for the invitation, Madam Speaker and Rahm; thank you very much. I enjoyed sharing ideas with Members of Congress.

One of the things I wanted to tell the members very clearly was, one, I appreciate their service to the country. Oftentimes, their service and the service that their families provide is taken for granted, and I want them to know how much I appreciate a willingness to be in politics. Politics is hard. It's hard because of the campaign; it's hard, in many cases, because of the travel. These

are hard times because of the big issues we face. And so thank you for giving me a chance to come and share in a recognition that a lot of folks appreciate them, including the President.

Secondly, I enjoyed sharing some priorities. My message really was that these are big goals that Democrats care about and Republicans care about, and we've got to work hard to find ways to achieve big goals. And I also was pleased to take questions, and I thought the questions were very good and gave me a chance to share philosophy

as well as how I think we can advance some very important issues.

I've met with the Speaker and Congressman Hoyer—Steny—quite a few times since I have been the President. We're going to—hopefully, we will—not hopefully—we will continue to meet. In my meetings I—look, we don't always agree, and that's why we're in different parties. [Laughter] But we do agree about our country, and we do agree about the desire to work together.

And so I really appreciate you letting me come by; I really do. I felt welcomed. I felt like people understood that I've got pressures on me, like I understand they have pressures on them. And I really hope that the members out there get a sense that I bear no ill will; I bring no animosity about the fact that we may not agree on every position, and that I am appreciative of the contributions they make.

And so thanks a lot for letting me come. I answered five or six questions. I was able to shake hands with a lot of members. I got to hug a few babies. [Laughter] I kind of remembered—help me remember the good old days. [Laughter]

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Still has the touch.

The President. Well, I don't know. [Laughter] One of the babies I got to hug was the Speaker's grandchild. But it was a—I would define the moment for me as relaxed, informative, and enjoyable.

So thank you very much for having me. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Burwell Ballroom at the Kingsmill Resort & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Rahm I. Emanuel, chairman, House Democratic Caucus.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters February 5, 2007

The President. I appreciate my Cabinet joining me today as we discussed our budget. Today we submit a budget to the United States Congress that shows we can balance the budget in 5 years without raising taxes.

Our economy is strong because of good policy and because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. By keeping taxes down, we actually generate strong revenues to the Treasury.

And I appreciate Director Portman helping us devise a plan that sets priorities and, at the same time, emphasizes fiscal restraint. Our priority is to protect the American people, and our priority is to make sure our troops have what it takes to do their jobs. We also have got priorities in national parks and education and health care. But we have proven—and I strongly

believe Congress needs to listen to a budget which has no tax increase and a budget, because of fiscal discipline, that can be balanced in 5 years.

Secondly, I strongly believe that Congress needs to do something on earmarks. In order to make sure that we're fiscally responsible with the people's money, Congress needs to make sure that when they spend the people's money, there's transparency and an up-or-down vote for each item. As well, I believe the President needs to have the line-item veto. It's one thing to get the size of the budget pie right; it's another thing to make sure that the slices in that pie meet national priorities.

And so the budget that Director Portman is going to be talking about is realistic, it's achievable, and it's got good reforms in it. So thank you very much. Looking forward